

Reformed Protestant Dutch Church
(Old Dutch Church)
Main Street
Kingston
Ulster County
New York

HABS No. NY-5573

HABS,
NY,
56-KING,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5573

REFORMED PROTESTANT DUTCH CHURCH

(Old Dutch Church)

Location: Main Street, between Fair and Wall Streets,
Kingston, Ulster County, New York
Latitude 41 55' 59" Longitude 74 01' 10"

Present Owner and
Occupant: Reformed Protestant Dutch Church.

Present Use: A church.

Significance: This church in the Wren-Gibbs tradition was
designed by the famous architect, Minard LaFever,
and it was based on his "project for a village
Church" in The Architectural Instructor. It has
some aspects of James Gibbs' St. Martin in the
Fields in London.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The original church cornerstone was laid May 20, 1851, and the church was dedicated September 28, 1852.
2. Architect: The famous architect Minard LaFever designed the church.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The area at the corner of Wall and Main Streets has been a burial ground and a church site for the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church since its establishment in the seventeenth century.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The carpentry work in the original church was done by Hallenbeck and Brink, and masonry work by Elias Van Ostrand.
5. Original plan and construction: The construction cost of the original church amounted to \$33,631.39.

6. Alterations and additions: The original spire was toppled in a wind storm on the night of December 24, 1853. After repairs, the building was opened again on May 7, 1854. The rebuilt spire was 217 feet tall, 22 feet shorter than as originally constructed.

The architect Minard LaFever originally specified a metal roof on the spire, but slate was used against his advice. As a result, by 1882 the east wall had bowed out a few inches and the ceiling and walls had been damaged by leaks in the roof. Thus in 1882-83 extensive repairs were undertaken. The slate was replaced by tin on the roof, a buttress was added to the east wall, the plaster walls and ceiling were repaired and repainted, new wainscoting was placed along the interior walls, and parts of the foundation were rebuilt. At the same time, hardwood floors were laid in the aisles, (now covered with carpeting), the front entryway was built, gilding was added to plaster figures and column capitals on the interior, the top of the spire was repaired, the minister's study was built on the northwest corner, and a chapel addition was added to the rear north end of the church. The architect for the addition is listed as J.A. Wood.

In 1891 the large stained glass window behind the pulpit attributed to Louis C. Tiffany of New York City, was installed.

In 1950 the chapel addition was converted into an auditorium, and further additions providing a stage area, offices, and educational rooms were built. The architect for these additions was Harry Halverson of Kingston. The building around the older chapel to the northwest is known as the Bethany Hall, and the educational wing to the northeast is called the Bethany Hall Annex.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Kingston, founded in 1659, is one of the oldest congregations in the State of New York.

Minard LaFever (1798-1854) the architect, was best known for his pattern books and Greek Revival buildings, although he did a number of Gothic and Renaissance Revival churches.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Archives of The Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, Kingston,
New York.

Deeds, County Clerk's Office, Ulster County Office Building,
Kingston, New York.

Report of the Building Committee, Reformed Protestant Dutch
Church, Kingston, New York, September 27, 1883.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Landy, Jacob. The Architecture of Minard LaFever. New York,
1970.

Sylvester, Nathaniel Bartlett. History of Ulster County, New
York. Philadelphia, 1880.

The Express. Kingston, New York, January 5, 1892.

Prepared by William C. Badger
Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The church is an impressive structure in the Wren-Gibbs tradition designed by the famous architect Minard LaFever.
2. Condition of the fabric: The church is in excellent condition.

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B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main church itself is a large building measuring 66' (seven-bay front) x 117' and is approximately two stories.
2. Foundations: The main body of the church has stone piers reinforced by buttresses. Stone foundations with brick piers support the auditorium addition.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The exterior walls are constructed of bluestone ashlar with white striated limestone used as horizontal banding and trim. There are buttresses on the east wall and below the pediments of the building. A molded limestone base surrounds the buttresses and a limestone band continues along the sides of the church above the foundations. The rear wall of the Bethany Hall Annex is constructed of brick.
4. Structural system, framing: The church is supported by exterior stone bearing walls with battered buttresses and by interior wood frame walls. Elaborate wooden truss design in the roof of nave ceiling is built similarly to groined vaults of wood and plaster.
5. Stoop: The front entrance has a two-step stoop with flanking, curved metal rails.
6. Chimneys: One principal brick chimney sits at the intersection of northeast part of the main church and the Bethany Hall addition. A small brick chimney protrudes from the roof's ridge at rear of the nave.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The principal entranceway is made up of two sections. The outward doorway is a large round molded encasement of striated white limestone with a prominent keystone. There are double wooden doors which have rectangular panels and square glass panes, each with a fanlight above. The inward set of paneled doors are set into the narthex, forming a small entryway, and are also double. These have glass panes with semi-circular transoms above. The lintel between doors and transoms extends around the periphery of the inside portion of the entry and two more

arched windows, as well as panels with glass are located there. Auxiliary doors of similar design to the entrance door flank the front. The other prominent outside doors include the northwest door through the base of the tower. It is similar to the outside part of the main entrance, but it has glass in the panels and no inside arrangements. The exterior door in the Bethany Hall Annex is also wood paneled and is set into a rectangular opening with a filled-in arch that simulates the older doors of the church.

- b. Windows: The most prominent window is a Palladian design within a round arched frame of striated limestone. This window is positioned directly over the main entry. Arched windows with limestone trim along the sides are opaque, colored glass set in small leaded frames. Over the pulpit on the rear north wall, although not seen from the outside, is a lighted Palladian ensemble of similar design to the front window. This has been attributed to Louis C. Tiffany and Company. Clerestory windows in the upper walls of the church have opaque, colorless glass with a border delineation of various colors. The windows in the Bethany Hall Annex are heavy muntined double-hung wooden windows with fifteen-over-fifteen yellow glass lights. The top windows in the bell tower and cupola have fixed louvers.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A gable roof shelters the main church with a pediment in the front. Another gable roof crosses the main axis at the apsidal end. The Bethany Hall Annex also is gabled. The roof covering is seamed tin over the main section and copper over the Bethany Hall Annex. It is seamed tin, builtup tar and gravel and slate over the Bethany Hall.
- b. Cornice: The cornice is a classical design of wood with dentils. The tower has an arched cornice over the belfry of similar design.
- c. Tower: The steeple roof is conical, painted gray and covered with wooden shingles and metal exterior ribs. Over the cornice in the cupola of the tower there is a black clock face in all four sides.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is no completely excavated basement under the sanctuary of the church however, a trap door to the left of the doors from the narthex leading into the nave allows access to a narrow excavated passage which goes to the basement underneath the auditorium addition at the apsidal end of the church. Under this addition, storage bins fill the spaces between the brick piers. The basement under Bethany Hall is finished and contains classrooms and meeting rooms with a central corridor.
- b. First Floor: The main entrance doors lead from the outside to a narthex which is flanked on both sides by anterooms. The anterooms contain stairs which lead to the choir and organ loft above the narthex and to long balconies used for seating that run on either side of the nave over the side aisles. The nave is five bays long (15' each) and is divided by Corinthian columns with gold highlighted capitals carrying arches from the side aisles. The aisles contain additional seating. The chancel and the choir balcony at either end of the nave are approximately half a regular bay in length and are as wide as the width of the nave itself. Two small doors on either side of the chancel lead to small anterooms which, in turn, open on to a large auditorium space on axis with the nave. The anteroom on the west is now used as a museum. The one on the east is used for passage and storage and has an exterior door.

The auditorium has a large raised stage with triangular dressing rooms on either side. This room has access through the west to a foyer under the bell tower which is also the entrance on the west side. The Bethany Hall Annex extends to the east of the auditorium, containing along a central corridor a kitchen and nursery on the north and toilets across the hall on the south.

- c. Second Floor: From the west foyer, steps lead up to a rear balcony in the auditorium which is across the central stage and about half the auditorium length. This

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balcony is presently used for communication and has the minister's study, a large classroom, and administrative offices along the length of it from west to east. This balcony passage is extended to allow access directly into the central corridor of the second floor of the Bethany Hall. This corridor has classrooms and offices on either side of it. The east terminus of the Bethany Hall Annex contains an enclosed fire stair and the east exit.

- d. Attic: Access to the attic is provided by a trapdoor in the closet of the second floor administrative part of the building. It does not have a finished portion. The spaces in the rear of the auditorium over the stage are presently inaccessible.
2. Stairways: Wooden stairs to the balcony and to the choir organ loft are sculptural, curved and are located in the anterooms on either side of the narthex of the church. Stairs to the balcony of the auditorium addition are located within the bell tower on the west side of the church. They have steel risers with terrazzo treads. Stairs to the second floor and the basement of Bethany Hall are located in a fire well at the east end of that portion. They are constructed of steel and have steel balusters and terrazzo treads.
3. Flooring: The entry sanctuary, narthex, nave, anterooms, stairs and balconies are covered with carpet. The rest of the church has asphalt tile flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior walls are finished with plaster, painted, with some wood paneling throughout. The ceilings in the church area are vaulted, with its intersections decorated with elaborate bosses.
5. Doors and doorways: Arched wooden doors are found in the narthex and the nave portions of the building. In other areas they are rectangular. All are paneled.
6. Decorative features and trim: The trim is of the Renaissance Revival style with highlights delineated in gold.
7. Hardware: Some brass hardware of simple design is found in the church.

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8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: An oil furnace provides steam heat for the church.
- b. Lighting: There is a notable large wrought-iron and glass exterior fixture over the main entrance. Bracket fixtures, and indirect cove light as well as hidden spotlights illuminate the interior of the nave. Elsewhere there are modern incandescent and efflorescent fixtures.

9. Notable original furniture: Wooden box pews with paneled doors and dark wood moldings are notable in the nave. An elegant pulpit in the altar area was designed by Minard LaFever. A large organ, located in the second floor front balcony, with corresponding pipes in the east wall, is a three-manual Meoller pipe organ with classical features, consisting of Corinthian pilasters with an entablature and a broken scroll pediment topped with an urn.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The church faces south on Main Street in the block between Fair and Wall Streets. It is set back from the street in the buryingground of the original congregation. Several notable gravestones and monuments are within the yard. These include the grave of New York Governor George Clinton, Jr.
2. Walks: Wide finished bluestone walks connect the main entrance to Main Street and the west entrance on Wall Street. There is another bluestone walk that follows the line of the building around the sides from the front entrance to Bethany Hall Annex. The whole complex is surrounded by an iron fence.

Prepared by: William C. Badger
Historian
Historic American
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Summer 1972

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) under joint sponsorship of the National Park Service and the Kingston Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission with financial assistance from the New York Council on the Arts. Measured and drawn during the summer of 1972 under the direction of John Poppeliers, chief of HABS and under the supervision of Roy Eugene Graham (University of Texas at Austin) by student architects Philip D. Ward (University of Washington), A. Carol Boerder (University of Texas at Austin), M. Morgan Gick (University of Notre Dame), and Stephen O. Fildes (Texas Tech University). The drawings were edited in December 1972 by architect John Burns. The written architectural and historical data was prepared by William C. Badger (University of Pennsylvania), the project historian, and edited in January 1980 by Susan McCown, a historian in the HABS office. The photos were taken in August 1973 by Jack E. Boucher of HABS staff.

ADDENDUM TO:
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